

THE PSALMS

THE LESSON: PSALM 42

The book of psalms in the Old Testament is a collection of poems set to musical accompaniment. They were written by many poets at many different dates, and were in use by Israel for many centuries before the birth of Jesus. This ancient “prayer book” is quoted repeatedly in the New Testament, has been used in Christian liturgy since the earliest days of the Church, and continues to be used in Christian worship, crossing all denominational lines—and of course a large portion of the psalms are included in our Book of Common Prayer’s Psalter (beginning on page 331).

No matter what your state of heart and mind, you can find a psalm to help express it. Are you joyful, anxious, hungry for justice, guilt-ridden, or thankful? The writers of the psalms have been there too, and this ancient collection of prayers and hymns is a wonderful resource for us in our own prayer lives.

The psalm we’re looking at today (42) is a “maskil” or an instructive psalm. While expressing the intense emotional state of the writer, the psalm goes back and forth between giving voice to the writer’s experience and responding with his own faith-fuelled exhortations back to himself.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

EACH MORNING: Take ten minutes to be quiet with God. Open by reading Psalm 100. If your spirit is feeling heavy, then begin with Psalm 43 instead. (*You can use the Psalter in the BCP, a Bible, or the translation below*).

EACH EVENING: Take ten minutes to be quiet with God. Open by reading Psalm 67. If your spirit is feeling heavy, then begin with Psalm 121 instead. (*You can use the Psalter in the BCP, a Bible, or the translation below*).

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O Most merciful Father, we humbly thank thee for all thy gifts so freely bestowed upon us. For life and health and safety, for power to work and leisure to rest, for all that is beautiful in creation and in the lives of men, we praise and magnify thy holy Name. But above all, we thank thee for our spiritual mercies in Christ Jesus our Lord, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. Fill our hearts with all joy and peace in believing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (THANKSGIVING PRAYER, BCP PAGE 736)

PSALM 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
²Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!
³Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!
⁵For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

PSALM 43

¹Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!
²For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
³Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!
⁴Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.
⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

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PSALM 67

¹May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, ²that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. ³Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! ⁴Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. ⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! ⁶The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. ⁷God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

PSALM 121

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? ²My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. ³He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. ⁶The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. ⁸The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

PSALM 42: **SPEAKING TO MY SOUL**

¹As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? ³My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” ⁴These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.

⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation ⁶and my God.

My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. ⁷Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. ⁸By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. ⁹I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” ¹⁰As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”

¹¹Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.